



Social Capital Theory and a Peaceful African Capital: Gaborone, Botswana

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Abstract: Social network analysis showed that Gaborone possesses an abundance of social ties across both social classes and communally organized groups. All efforts to find socially isolated groups failed, as would be predicted by social capital theory in a peaceful, prosperous community. Furthermore, some evidence emerged that a nascent national identity might be replacing tribal identity

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As seen through the selective screen of the national and international news, Sub-Saharan Africa is a dramatic hotbed of war, disease, poverty, corruption, and who knows what other social ills. However, a much more pedestrian side of the region exists where people go to school, work at jobs, have farms and businesses, and raise families the same as elsewhere. It will be shown that this happy circumstance may be associated with favorable conditions for social capital theory found in the social structure of the city.

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY

It is well recognized on the popular level and confirmed in academic social science research that a person's chances of getting ahead in life are greatly improved with connections to people well placed in society. A review of the academic literature on social networks and status attainment found a universal, positive relationship between these two variables whether within or across different societies, different levels of industrialization/Westernization, or different categories of people. It also held across different measures of social capital and status (Lin, 1999, p. 481). Therefore, for the health of the society, it is important to determine whether or not the poorest groups have access to the society's resources. Resources in this case are not limited to money, jobs, and political power, but also include knowledge of all kinds, such as how to get into a school, how to relate to school officials (Horvat et al., 2003), how to succeed once there, basic knowledge of nutrition and health care, information about where jobs are and how to obtain them, how to start a business or how to get a loan, who your friends are (Clark-Ibanez & Felmler, 2004), and much more that we take for granted in our daily lives.

Social capital theory is the formal academic statement of why social connections are important for society (Putnam, 2000).

Social Class

The most important relationships or connections for advancement are not necessarily among people who are close socially. The founding work of social network theory showed that distant, or weak, ties were more important for locating employment because new information flowed into a more cohesive group along the more distant connections (Granovetter, 1973). Family and friends would all have about the same information about opportunities and other resources. More distant and diverse relationships would give the individual new information. Being a member of an outcast group or in a very low ranking position, such as a servant, does not need to mean perpetual disadvantage if some kind of contact exists with the better off.

Two non-academic examples from the US African-American community illustrate the point. The core of today's African-American elite of wealthy and highly educated members was laid during slave days. Sometimes the unacknowledged children of plantation owners and slave women received land in their fathers' wills. The land enabled the children and their descendents to achieve prosperity and social advantage (Graham, 2000). More recently, Pullman's invention of the sleeping car on early trains proved to be another opportunity for the disadvantaged. African-American men were employed as porters where they came into contact with the white elite. One of these porters read *The Wall Street Journal* the wealthy travelers left behind and the owner of Phillips Petroleum talked to him for hours about business and finance. Samuel Coleman, now 81 years old, put that

informal education to work. He formed an investment club with a neighbor and eventually enjoyed financial success (Newcott, 2009, p.56).

The distribution of resources in society is related to the much larger subject of peace and war. In ethnically organized societies, the incidence of violent conflict is highly associated with an excluded population, both in states having many different groups and those having just a few. If a group is excluded from national life, the potential for conflict along ethnic lines is high (Wimmer et al., 2009). This analysis will try to identify a tribe or other nationally significant social unit which does not share fully in national life, i.e. a group not well connected to other social units. Consistent with the theory of weak ties, the connection will be through acquaintances rather than family or friends. Additionally, it seems reasonable to focus specifically on the wealthy and the poor, and thus social class becomes an important variable. If the very wealthy are isolated and keep all resources to themselves, we can expect protest sooner or later from the poor. What is more likely, according to Brinton (1965), is protest from those at upper and middle social levels who are concerned about the poor. Thus a society with either an isolated wealthy group or an isolated poor group, or both, would be potentially unstable and the society might expect conflict (Midlarsky, 1982 ; Besancon, 2005; Burton & Highley, 1987).

Communal Groups

Socio-economic class is not the only internal social structure related to the distribution of resources critical for peace or conflict. Another is the society's communal organization and the degree of separation among communal groups. All the societies which come to mind contain communal units of some kind, as well as socio-economic classes. Here in the US, our best

known communal social unit is the African American community, but other well known ones are the Native American as well as Latin American/Hispanic, Chinese, and even white, Southern, poor, mountain communities. There are many, many others. Conflict across communal lines is common, including here in the US, most recently against Muslims and very importantly in our history, between whites and African Americans. Well known world examples of countries with past and present extremely serious communal conflict are Lebanon, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Ireland, Somalia, and Sri Lanka. These examples show the need in many societies to unify communal groups to achieve and maintain peace. In the Middle Eastern conflicts, tribally organized social units are of paramount importance, as is the case in the African societies.

A tribally organized social unit is defined genealogically (Anthromophemics, 2009). That is, the members of that social unit consider themselves biologically related. They also share a history, customs, and language. Contrary to some other African societies, the people of Botswana openly identify their tribal membership when introducing themselves, discuss tribal concerns in the newspaper, are proud of their heritage, and work for the political recognition and rights of their tribes. Tribal membership is so normal there that a taxi driver once asked me, an obvious foreigner, what tribe I was from.

Since the tribe is such an important social structure in Botswana, this work will consider it along with social class. Questions will be whether social relationships exist across tribal lines as well as social class lines. In view of social capital theory, a search will be made for isolated tribes, both the wealthy and the poor, and whether one or more live outside the main body of the population, either cut

off from obtaining resources or from sharing them.

National Identity

In addition to the structures of social class and tribe, the social structure of the nation will be addressed briefly. The data unexpectedly showed that a national identity rather than a tribal identity characterized a tiny minority of the city.

The Setting

Botswana is one example of a peaceful African society. It has been called the Switzerland of Africa and the "Bots" are proud of never having had a revolution or a coup. Though in the 19th century, Botswana asked England for protection from an expanding Boer state, it was never formally a colony. Botswana is just over the northern border of the Republic of South Africa and is flat, desert country, resembling the US southwest. It is nearly a functioning democracy with regular changes of officials by election. The economy is based on diamonds and is prosperous enough for it to be placed nearly in the category of a second world nation. Transparency International (2010) rates it as relatively low in corruption with a score of 5.8 on a scale of 0 to 10. Sweden has the highest score of 9.2. Botswana suffers from the AIDS epidemic but the government took action immediately at the outbreak, never denied the disease, and provides medical care. The capital Gaborone, or Gabs, like Washington D.C., was built on new land expressly chosen to be the capital. Gaborone has modern, low density housing for all social classes. Lowest income areas have few city services and relatively poor housing, as would be expected, but I was all over the city and never saw anything that would be called a ghetto or a slum.

Several large, upscale malls are located on the outskirts. Buildings in the

government section of the city are modern and would fit into any Western cityscape.

SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

A review of the US sociological and the English-language African literature has thus far revealed one US study similar to this one, and none at all in the African literature. The US study used the index of qualitative variation rather than social network analysis, though social network analysis also would have been appropriate. Respondents reported the voluntary organizations they belonged to and whether the organizations were located inside or outside their own neighborhoods. The question was whether or not voluntary organizations promoted cross-race contacts (Glanville, 2004).

Two long standing traditions in the sociological literature are related to this study. One is the question of a national elite in the US. Just one example in a large collection of such studies is by Moore (1979). Elite respondents reported their discussion partners on national issues. The second closely related, similarly long standing and productive research tradition is of interlocking directorships of corporations. A large proportion of a board of directors who are also members of another board indicates a close relationship (Koenig, 1981, Pfeffer, 1981) among the corporations. Furthermore, Burris (2005) found that these social relationships are more important even than economic interests in building social cohesion.

METHODOLOGY

The data were drawn from a random sample survey N=296 of the city of Gaborone during June and July of 2006. Gathering data by survey questionnaire is a primary research tool in network analysis (Marsden, 1990). The four interviewers were advanced sociology students at the

University of Botswana who had extensive interviewing experience. Mindful of numerous tales of interviewer fraud in other African surveys, I accompanied the four every day, seven days a week, rotating my presence in the interviews. Interviews were held in both Tswana and English, as appropriate. At the end of the summer, the interviews were packaged, mailed to the US, and entered in SPSS. The data were analyzed by the social network analysis program, Ucinet (Borgatti, 1999).

The questionnaire focused on tribal membership with the questions heavily influenced by the instrument used for the major survey of African countries called Afrobarometer from Michigan State University. The checklist of tribes in my questionnaire was from the Afrobarometer questionnaire. Names of other tribes were added as they appeared in the interviews. Questions asked for the respondent's tribe, tribe of relatives, parents, friends, acquaintances and spouses. Respondents answered these questions easily. A couple of the older respondents even slowed down the interview considerably by insisting on giving historical details of their own tribes. Only two or three respondents had difficulty with any of the questions, and those were about the socio-economic status of the respondent. These respondents insisted they were of equal status with everyone else and that no one was higher or lower than anyone else.

The unit of analysis for social networks was the tie between two respondents. The result was not a diagram of each respondent and all the connections the respondent had with other people and they with each other. Rather, the tie was characterized as being between respondents from the same tribe or between respondents from two different tribes. This analysis focused on cross tribal relationships so the number of ties between

all the individuals of tribe A and tribe B was the measure of the connection between these two tribes. In the network diagrams, thick lines indicate close relationships and thin lines more distant relationships.

In this analysis, whether or not a tie is reciprocal is largely irrelevant, although certain ties assuredly are reciprocal. If L reports that he is a brother to M, M most likely will report that he is a brother to L, even if they never have any contact. Friends usually report they are friends to each other, though sometimes only one will report the relationship. More often, acquaintances will not agree on a relationship. The important point for this analysis is that a cross-tribal contact exists, even if only in one direction.

FINDINGS

Socio-Economic Status

Consideration of social class in the city begins with the occupational structure as presented in the demographic data collected in the survey. Table 1 gives the results.

At first it appeared that professionals were greatly over represented in the data (32%) and the sample might be skewed. The Botswana census data were not available but comparison with another capital city, Washington DC, was useful. Table 1 shows that professionals comprise 31% of Washington DC's population, which is essentially the same as Gaborone's. The much larger proportion of the Gaborone occupational structure devoted to management, business, and finance (49%) might be explained by the unusually active construction in the growing city, and possibly coding differences. Table 1 portrays Gaborone as having a high status population, and other characteristics of the sample are consistent with that finding.

Table 1: Comparison of Occupational Structure of Gaborone and Selected US Cities 2006

Occupation	Gaborone	Washington DC	US High	US Low	US Overall
Management, business, finance	(117) 49%	21%	23%	8%	14%
Professional	(75) 32%	31%	36%	12%	20%
Service-cleaners, drivers, guards, domestics	(45) 19%	15%	25%	15%	17%
Total, Gaborone	(237) 100%				

The unemployed have been excluded from the Gaborone data, including students and homemakers.

Data for the US are from the US Census, American Factfinder, GCT 2401, 2402, 2403, 2006.

Over 40 percent of the respondents reported having attended either a technical school or college after high school. That educational level compares favorably with the US figure of 50 percent. At the same time nearly five percent, or 14 respondents, had not attended school at all.

Residence

All the sections of the city are officially designated as high SES, medium, low, or very low. Roughly one third of the sections are designated high or medium SES, one third low, and a few more of them (37%) are very low. In fact, on the ground, all the sections we visited, except perhaps one of the highest SES sections, had some housing from all the SES categories in them, though one category predominated. House lots are large, even in poor sections, and a large, expensive house often has a much smaller house behind it. Officially these are servants’ quarters but at least as frequently, they are rental property. At the same time, a city section categorized as poor will have some houses that are expensive, ranch-style, upper middle class homes. At least from the standpoint of residence, the population is in contact across SES lines.

SES of Tribes

As might be expected, the tribes differ both in overall and internal SES composition. Table 2 includes all the respondents interviewed for which SES data were collected. It will be seen that non-Botswanans were in the sample, which should not be surprising in a large metropolis. For example, one of the Kenyans was an officer in the Embassy of Kenya. The non-Botswanans were coded only for nationality and not tribal membership. For example, Zambian respondents were analyzed only as Zambians and not as Luo. The Muslims and Hindus in the sample were Botswanans, but are not organized tribally. It can be seen that tribal representation in the sample varies in size from one Nanjwa to 44 Kalanga respondents. Tribes vary in social standing from a score of 1 to 5 on a 6 point scale. The Muslims and Tawana lead in the scale and the Tswapong and Herero are on the bottom of the scale.

Nationality and tribal internal social stratification are presented in Table 3. The tribes vary in the proportion of their members who are in the highest socio-economic category.

Table 2 Mean SES Score for all Groups, professional = 1

Group		SES Score	S.D.
Kenya	(2)	1.00	0
Indian-Muslim	(2)	1.25	0.5
Tawana	(3)	1.33	0.577
Xhosa	(4)	1.50	0.577
Tlokwa	(3)	1.67	1.155
Zambia	(4)	1.75	1.5
Other	(8)	2.00	1.927
Indian-Hindu	(2)	2.00	1.414
Birwa	(2)	2.00	2.236
Ngwaketse	(15)	2.73	1.907
Khurutse	(4)	2.75	2.363
Kgalagadi	(5)	2.80	1.789
Lete	(14)	2.86	2.033
Shona	(8)	2.88	1.885
Kgatla	(34)	2.97	1.867
Chinese	(1)	3.00	----
Ndebele	(8)	3.00	2.264
Ngwato	(41)	3.02	1.864
Kalanga	(44)	3.09	1.75
SAMPLE MEAN	(295)	3.14	1.89
Hurutshe	(14)	3.36	1.865
Rolong	(13)	3.46	1.713
Talaote	(3)	3.67	2.517
Nanjwa	(1)	4.00	----
San	(1)	4.00	----
Kwena	(23)	4.26	1.484
Batswana only	(8)	4.38	1.923
Zuru	(4)	4.50	1.291
Tswapong	(17)	4.65	1.835
Sotho	(1)	5.00	----
Herero	(1)	5.00	----

N=295, 30 groups

ANOVA=.004, significant

1=professional/managerial

2=supervisor of skilled and unskilled, office, foreman

3=office worker, secretary, sales clerk, high school

4=skilled manual, carpenter electrician, cook, sewing

5=low level business, vendor, tuck shop, herbalist

6=unskilled manual, soldier, child care

Table 3: The Proportion of each Tribe who are Professionals/Managers, in Descending Order

Tribe	% of the tribe in the highest SES level
Kenya	(3) 100%
Babirwa	(4) 80%
Zambia	(4) 80%
Muslim	(3) 75%
Other	(5) 71%
Batawana	(2) 67%
Batlokwa	(2) 67%
Ndebele	(4) 50%
Xhosa	(2) 50%
Hindu	(1) 50%
Bakhurutshe	(2) 50%
Balete	(7) 50%
Bangwaketse	(7) 47%
Bakgalagadi	(2) 40%
Bakgatla	(13) 38%
Shona	(3) 38%
Bangwato	(14) 34%
Batalaote	(1) 33%
Bakalanga	(14) 32%
Bahurutshe	(4) 29%
Barolong	(2) 15%
Batswana only	(1) 13%
Batswapong	(2) 12%
Bakwena	(2) 9%

N=104, 35 percent of the sample.

Taken from a table with Chi square significant at the .022

Tribes with no members in the sample in the highest occupational category, though it is highly likely that such people exist:

- Baherero
- Banajwa
- Basarwa
- Zezeru
- Chinese
- Sotho

Residential Integration

The tables above indicate that geographic socio-economic integration exists in the neighborhoods. When the social structures of SES and tribe are analyzed together in the city districts, high integration appears again. Both tribes and social classes are coming into contact with each other to some degree or other in the neighborhoods

The sample contained respondents from 33 districts in the city. Eight of the 33 districts were so mixed tribally that no one tribe predominated numerically and four districts had two tribes which were co-dominant numerically. In the remaining 20 remaining districts, one tribe was more numerous than the others but it was not always the same one. The Kalanga were the most numerous in seven districts, but these districts were classified at all SES levels, not just the wealthy, middle class or poor. The Ngwato were most numerous in five districts. The Kwena predominated in two districts and the others in one each. The importance of the Kalanga and the Ngwato would be expected as they are the most numerous in the population. Even so, the Kalanga make up only 15 percent of the city population and the Ngwato 14 percent of the city. It is clear that this is a city of much tribal diversity. The tribal residential integration in Gaborone is greater than racial residential integration in the US where census blocks can rise to nearly 100 percent African-American or white.

Cross Tribal Relationships

It is time now to turn to relationships only across tribal lines, leaving aside the question of relationships across SES lines. The data on the tribal membership of acquaintances were subjected to social network analysis. Relationships with acquaintances were selected as the variable rather than others in the network.

relationships with family or friends since, as explained above, distant and more dispersed relationships on the whole have been shown to be the more important for advancement.

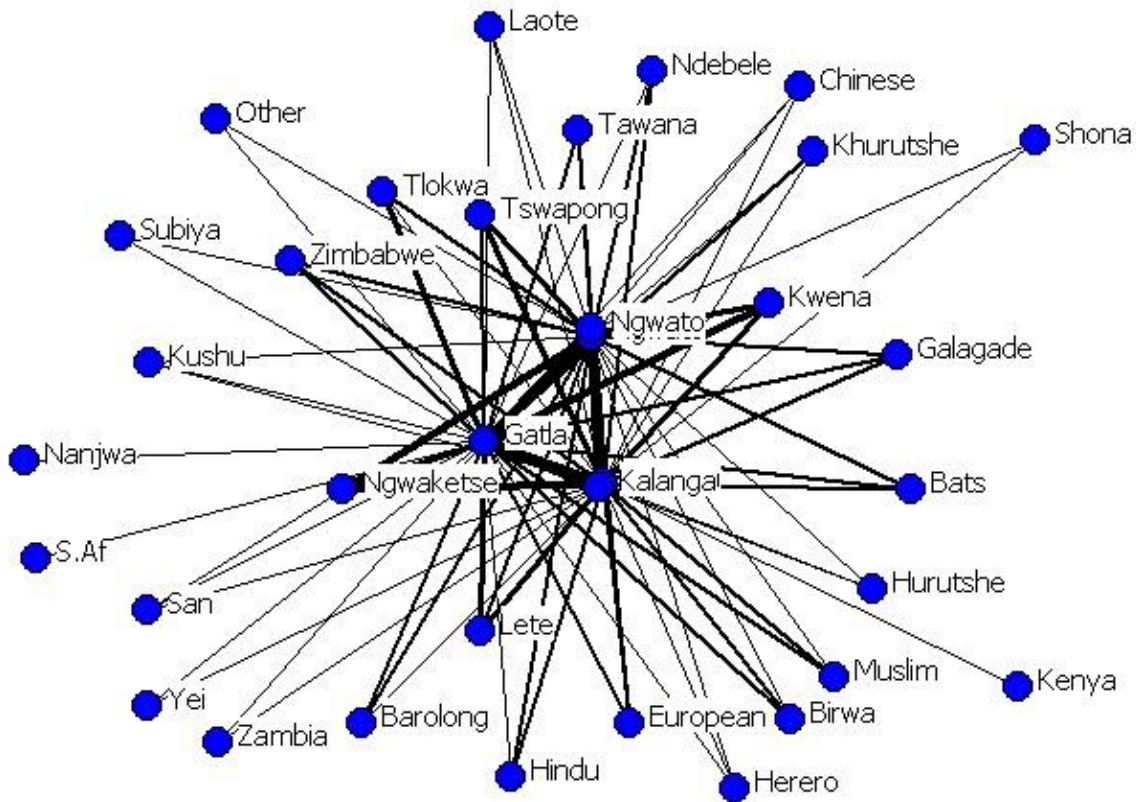
It is immediately apparent in Figure 1 that the tribes in Gaborone are well connected to each other in a tangled spaghetti of relationships. It is further apparent that some tribes are more connected to each other than to certain others and form distinct clusters within the highly connected population.

Thickness of lines in Figure 1 roughly indicates the number of connections among the tribes. Thicker lines indicate that the two or more tribes have many connections with each other. Thin lines indicate only one tie. Those with the most connections with each other are placed roughly in the center of the figure. Those with fewer connections with each other are placed progressively farther out.

The Ngwato, Gatla, and Kalanga form a tightly intertwined cluster at the center of the figure. The Kwena and Ngwaketse are almost as strongly connected to the inner three as well as to each other and are located just a little farther out. Even farther out are Galagade, Botswana-only, Zimbabwe, Tlokwa, and Tswapong. The farthest away from the center have only one tie to one tribe in the central cluster: Nanjwa, South African, and Kenyan.

It stands to reason that anyone who is in the inner cluster of dense intertribal relationships would have more information and other resource-sharing opportunities than those farther out in the circle. But even the individual way out on the fringe would be able to share the benefits of society. Even one connection to the inner circle would simultaneously be a connection to all.

Figure 1. Social Network Analysis of the Kalanga, Ngwato, Gatla and Their Acquaintances



Socio-Tribal Isolation

Connectedness can be further explored by returning to SES and a closer look at two special groups. Since it is important whether or not the poor and the wealthy are connected to each other, we can look at the San and the town of Phakalange.

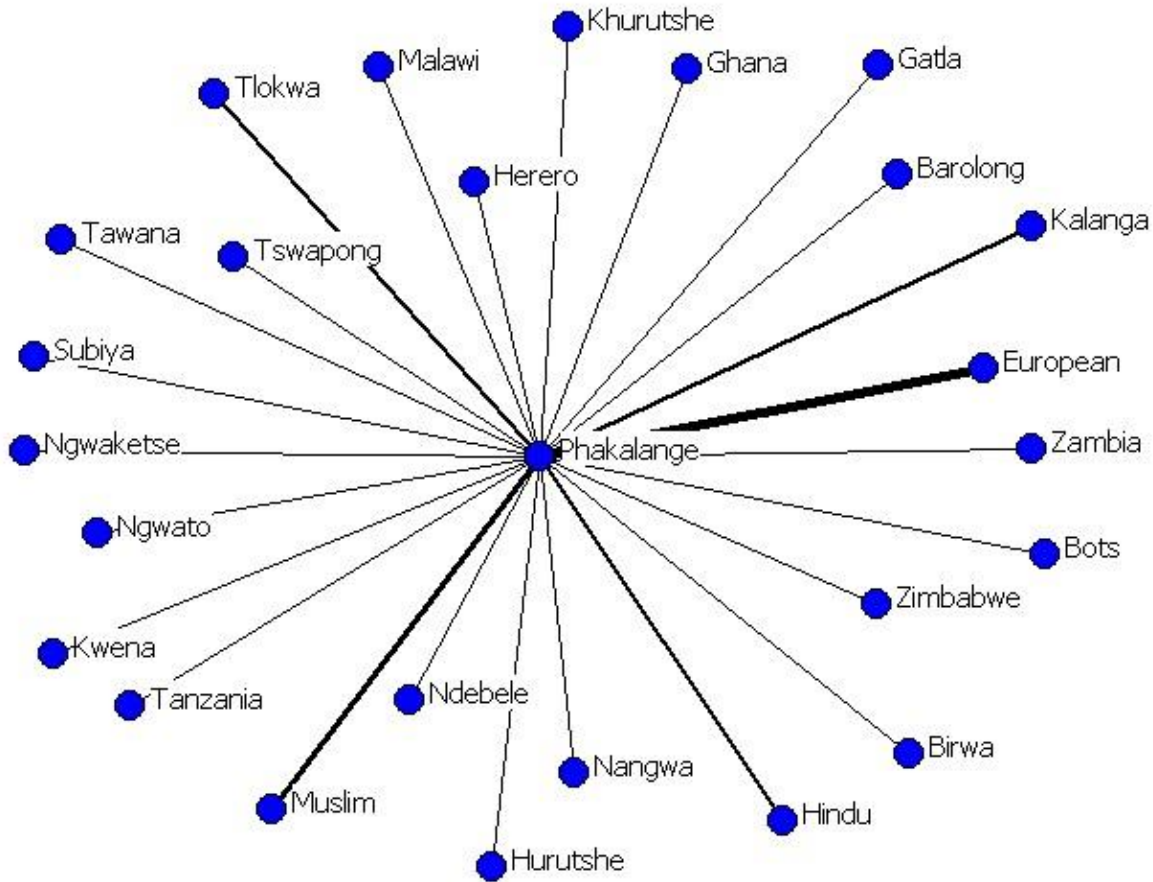
One of the groups is the tribally-organized San. They are popularly called “Bushmen,” but in Botswana their politically active members reject the name as pejorative. They prefer the name San or Sarwa. All sides acknowledge that the San are the poorest tribe in the country and suffer from discrimination. Phakalange is a town, rather than a tribe, about half an hour’s drive from Gaborone, built expressly

for the wealthy. Phakalange possesses a golf course with an impressive, modern-style club house. The houses on an expanse of land around the golf course are large and architect-designed, set in tasteful landscaping. Many Westerners and foreign Africans live there.

Only seven Phakalange interviews were obtained. Interviewing in that community was done only as a test and only 14 interviews were attempted. However, Botswana researchers predicted that we would get no interviews at all because of the exclusiveness of the community.

Figure 2 diagrams the connections Phakalange respondents report having with their acquaintances.

Figure 2. Social Network Analysis of Phakalange Acquaintances



N=7

This wealthy community is shown to have important ties with a wide range of others, but no San appear among them. Since only seven Phakalange respondents were interviewed, the last word has yet to be spoken, but Figure 1 showed previously that the San have good direct and indirect connections with tribes which are themselves in direct connection with the wealthy community. The Ngwato, Gatla, and especially the Kalanga have good, direct connections with Phakalange, and the San are connected directly to the Kalanga and the Gatla and indirectly to the Ngwato through the Gatla and Ngwaketse. The San are at a disadvantage in their access to this

source of wealth but not isolated from it. Furthermore, it is more than likely that a larger sample will reveal direct connections. Neither the wealthy nor the poor in this city live in isolated communities.

National Identity

It is not possible to be around African studies very long before encountering the incendiary topic of whether or not tribes exist and what to call them. One of the choices a respondent could make on the questionnaire when identifying tribal membership was “Botswana only.” That is, a respondent was allowed not to belong to a tribe at all but to hold a national identity as a

citizen of Botswana. Three percent of the sample, or eight people, made this choice. In itself, three percent is a derisory figure, but when taken as a proportion of the population of 186,000 (Botswana Census, 2001) it is a respectable community of 5,580 people. These data cannot explain the decision to adopt a national rather than a tribal identity, but they can form a preliminary portrait of this person.

In view of the emotionality of the subject in US academia, it must be emphasized that the Botswana-only respondents did not have the slightest trouble identifying the tribes their family, friends, and acquaintances belonged to. One even reported which tribe he came from. At no time did these respondents deny tribe or give any indication they knew about the controversy. None of the interviewers knew about the controversy and, when it was explained to them, they did not understand it. Thus, they could not have influenced the respondents.

All eight Botswana-only were from mixed parents, that is, their mother and their father belonged to different tribes. Half the Botswana-only were men and half were women. They were born outside Gaborone but at the same time had lived in Gaborone longer, 18 years, than the sample average, 15 years. Reasonably, they were also a little older, their mean year of birth being 1963, compared with the rest of the sample of 1968. All but one spoke Tswana as the home language, while around 20 percent of the others spoke a second language at home, usually English or Kalanga. Seventy-five percent of them were either never married or not living with a partner, compared with 35 percent of the others. (Chi square was not significant at .177). The Botswana-only had a mean of only seven years of school compared with 12 years for the rest. (Anova is statistically significant.) The low education level is

surprising because the “no tribe” position is a very elite one held by American and European professors. Consistent with the lower level of education is a mean SES of 4.4 (1.0 is the highest score) compared with a higher level of 3.1 for the others. (Anova is not statistically significant). The Botswana-only might live in a more homogenous community. Their friends come from a mean of two tribes, compared with four, and their acquaintances from three tribes, compared with five. (Anova is statistically significant).

The findings on national identity can give the tribe debate new direction. Instead of yelling, “They’re not out there,” or “Yes they are,” we can see where they are and are not and how they grow or do not.

CONCLUSION

These data support social capital theory. A peaceful, prosperous capital city has been shown to possess social connections among the social structures of socio-economic status and tribe. The people of Gaborone themselves say, “We are all tangled up.” Survey data show this to be objectively true. The ultimate “tangled up” nature of tribes would mean the disappearance of tribe as a social structure and its replacement by the nation, i.e., the individual’s identity as a citizen of a nation rather than as a member of a tribe. The minute evidence of the development of national identity in Gaborone should enlighten the academic debate over tribe.

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